

Understanding the Landscape: Child Sexual Abuse Awareness in Georgia

Setting the Context

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a significant public health concern in Georgia. The Division of Family and Children Services documents nearly 30,000 reports of child abuse and neglect annually, with sexual abuse and trafficking allegations exceeding 6,000 cases each year since 2021. Despite these figures, no recent assessment has examined how Georgians perceive the issue—whether they recognize it as a community problem, whether they trust that resources exist, or whether they believe prevention is possible.

Researchers from Georgia State University and Saprea conducted a statewide online survey of 3,157 adult Georgians using two samples: a Qualtrics-recruited representative panel (REP; n = 2,819), stratified to align with Georgia census demographics, and a convenience sample (CONV; n = 338) recruited through community partnerships and child advocacy organizations.

Georgians' Perceptions

Respondents indicated their level of agreement (1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree) with four statements about CSA.

Table 1. Georgians' Perceptions on CSA — 2025 Findings

Survey Statement	REP Sample Mean (n = 2,819)	CONV Sample Mean (n = 338)
Q1. In your immediate community (e.g., neighborhood, family, faith, club, business), child sexual abuse is a problem.	3.11	3.69
Q2. My community has the resources needed to address child sexual abuse.	2.61	4.14
Q3. Child sexual abuse is more prevalent in Georgia than the national average.	3.22	3.49
Q4. Child sexual abuse is preventable.	2.23	2.31

Note: Lower scores indicate stronger agreement. Scale: 1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree.

Three findings stand out. First, **Georgians overwhelmingly agree that CSA is preventable—roughly 86% of all**

respondents agreed, with no meaningful difference between the representative panel and the advocacy-engaged sample. This near-universal consensus is one of the strongest findings of the study.

Second, the two samples diverge dramatically on resource availability. **Among representative sampled Georgians, about 76% believe community resources to address CSA exist; among advocacy-engaged respondents, only about 38% agree** that enough resources are available (M = 2.61 vs. 4.14, d = 1.00). Those most directly engaged with Georgia’s child advocacy infrastructure observe resource gaps that the broader public does not seem to perceive.

Table 2. Representative (REP) Sample Perceptions

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Q1. In your immediate community (e.g., neighborhood, family, faith, club, business), child sexual abuse is a problem.	22%	9%	69%
Q2. My community has the resources needed to address child sexual abuse.	12%	12%	76%
Q3. Child sexual abuse is more prevalent in Georgia than the national average.	19%	21%	60%
Q4. Child sexual abuse is preventable.	7.3%	6.3%	86.4%

Third, **roughly one-third (30.9%) of the representative panel of surveyed Georgians do not recognize CSA as a problem in their immediate community**, (see Table 2) even when they recognize it as a state or national issue. This “not in my backyard” pattern is concentrated in specific demographic and geographic groups, detailed below.

Demographic Insights

Perceptions vary meaningfully across demographic groups in ways that suggest where awareness and outreach efforts can have the greatest impact.

In our representative panel, parents with minor-age children at home are the most likely to identify the need for resources in their immediate community, and the most likely to agree that CSA is an issue. By contrast, those whose children no longer live at home showed markedly lower engagement on both measures. Nevertheless, belief

in preventability remains uniformly high across all parent groups.

Older Georgians are less likely to acknowledge CSA in their community. Age was a consistent predictor of three of the four perception items in the representative sample, with older Georgians less likely to acknowledge CSA as a community problem, more skeptical that resources exist, and less likely to view Georgia’s prevalence as elevated above the national average.

Perception patterns among ethnic and racial groups warrant culturally responsive outreach. Some groups (see Table 3) were less likely to acknowledge CSA as an immediate community problem, while simultaneously expressing greater skepticism that adequate resources exist.

Table 3. REP Panel Perception Means by Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	n =	Question 1	Question 2
Hispanic / Latino	189	3.59	2.96
Black and African American	570	2.96	2.84
White / Caucasian	2119	3.02	2.55
Asian	53	2.53	2.75
American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native	35	3.29	3.11
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	14	2.64	3.14
Other	12	4.92	3.67
Total Respondents	2819	3.1	2.6

Note: Lower mean scores indicate stronger agreement. Scale: 1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree.

Urban and rural respondents reported differing perceptions on resource availability. Respondents provided their zip code of residence which was paired with the corresponding RUCA (Rural-Urban Commuting Area) code to compare perceptions from urban and rural communities. The representative sample was heavily concentrated in metropolitan areas. When asked if CSA was an issue in their immediate community (Q1), responses clustered in a relatively narrow band between suggesting broadly similar perceptions across population density areas, with the strongest agreement among respondents in small-town high-commuting areas (RUCA 8, mean = 1.97) and the weakest among those in rural areas (RUCA 10, mean = 2.73) and micropolitan high-commuting areas (RUCA 5, mean = 2.71). When questioned about resource access (Q2), respondents had considerably more variation. For instance, respondents in small-town and low-commuting areas (RUCA 6, 8, and 9) expressed the strongest agreement

(means of 1.65, 1.61, and 1.79, respectively), while those in micropolitan high-commuting (RUCA 5, mean = 3.59) and rural areas (RUCA 10, mean = 3.32) expressed the weakest agreement.

Table 4. REP Panel Perception Means by Primary RUCA Code

Primary RUCA	n =	Question 1	Question 2
1	1946	2.22	2.66
2	164	2.28	2.95
3	75	2.09	2.12
4	121	2.31	2.71
5	34	2.71	3.59
6	40	2.38	1.65
7	19	2.68	2.68
8	152	1.97	1.61
9	71	2.04	1.79
10	104	2.73	3.32

Note: Lower mean scores indicate stronger agreement. Scale: 1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree.

Primary RUCA Code Designation Explanation
1 = Metropolitan core: primary commuting flow is within an urban area of 50,000 or more people (metro urban area/UA)
2 = Metropolitan high commuting: primary commuting flow is 30 percent or more to a metro UA
3 = Metropolitan low commuting: primary commuting flow is 10 percent to 30 percent to a metro UA
4 = Micropolitan core: primary flow is within an urban area of 10,000 to 49,999 people (micro UA)
5 = Micropolitan high commuting: primary commuting flow is 30 percent or more to a micro UA
6 = Micropolitan low commuting: primary commuting flow is 10 percent to 30 percent to a micro UA
7 = Small town core: primary commuting flow is within an urban area of 9,999 or fewer people (small town UA)
8 = Small town high commuting: primary commuting flow is 30 percent or more to a small-town UA
9 = Small town low commuting: primary commuting flow is 10 percent to 30 percent to a small-town UA
10 = Rural areas: primary commuting flow is to a tract outside an UA

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